

6 TIPS to Parenting with Mental Health in Mind

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01

Validation

Often times when are children, or teens, begin having **big** feelings it's hard not to get sucked into attempting to use logic with them. However, think about when you are having big feelings we are thinking illogically. Once we calm our nervous system then we are able to think logically and better take perspective. So when big feels come up **first** validate your child's feeling. Help them calm their nervous system. **Then** once your child is calm have the conversation of perspective taking or providing consequences if necessary.

02

Connection & Quality Time

Connection is key! It is important that your child feels that you understand them and love them for who they are. Think of anyone in your life who you seemed to only interact with when they need something or are telling you what to do. How often do you want to listen to them? Or share parts of your life with them? That is not going to be a solid foundation when it comes to helping your child through the ups and downs of life. They need to see you as a helper not someone to be scared of. We often learn the most about our children when spending quality time together. Find ways to spend time with your child. Take an interest in their interests. Go on dates together, etc.

03

Clear Consistent Expectations

Children and teens naturally push the boundaries and take risks. They have less impulse control and do not have the years of experience in life, or fully developed brains like we do! They need clear and consistent rules and consequences for when those rules are broken. We have to teach our children responsibility and what to do after we make mistakes. Think about how you feel after you make a mistake and what helps you in those moments. I'm sure being screamed at and belittled was not always helpful in learning from your mistakes. It often makes us more defensive and move away from reflection. Last note on this one is as your child ages give them age appropriate responsibilities. It is our job to prepare them for adult hood! Get them ready through baby-steps!

04

Social Media & Screen Time

Now with streaming it is so much easier for children and teens to watch shows that are not age appropriate. Be sure to pay attention to what your teens are watching. Online can be a fun space and a dangerous space. Make sure your child feels safe coming to talk to you about things happening online. Lastly, research has shown teens are more likely to self report anxiety and suicidal thoughts from spending more than 3 hours a day on social media. Again, teens are impulsive help your child learn how to manage their screen time!

05

Modeling

We are the adults and it is our job to model for our children the things we want from them. If you yell at your child and expect them not to yell when they are angry that is not very fair is it? We learn how to manage our emotions from watching the people around us. Kids soak up what happens around them. This goes for more than just when we are having big emotions. The way we talk about our body, our friends, our family members, how we treat others, this will all be seen and copied by our children. So do your best to model what you hope/expect from them!

06

Know When to get HELP

Yes, children can be worried and teens can be moody but also 1 in 3 teens experience an anxiety disorder. Depression can start to develop during the teen years. When it comes to mental health disorders the sooner we receive help the better! Therefore, I highly recommend reaching out to a therapist if you start to see your child or teen struggle.